

ABSTRACT
SWITCHED ETHERNET NETWORKS

Methods and apparatus are provided for managing data communications between hosts
5 (9) of a switched Ethernet network (8). Hosts (9) are assigned to logical groups of hosts such
that the hosts participating in a data communication are assigned to the same group. In a switch
(1) of the network, each group is associated with a service class indicative of requirements for
forwarding data across the switch (1) for data communications between hosts (9) in that group.
Data received by the switch (1) is forwarded across the switch in a manner dependent on the
10 service class of the group to which hosts (9) participating in the data communication are
assigned. In the switch (1), data communications between hosts (9) in one or more of said
groups are disabled when required to satisfy the forwarding requirements for at least one said
service class.

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